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ABSTRACT

The manual describes the development and implementation of a project for gifted and talented students (grades K-12) in a rural, culturally isolated area (Wells River, Vermont). Approaches to the following project components are discussed: needs assessment, project goals and objectives, implementation (including staff responsibility), activities (including a list of activities implemented and community resources called upon), and evaluation (including depiction of progress made on project objectives). Five basic misconceptions of the project, for example, that publicity was not good for the project, are exposed. Continuation of certain project components, such as increased interest in reading and a teacher advisor program in which teachers deliver individualized student counseling are proposed. (CL)

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# PROJECT GATE

## Gifted and Talented Education

## A Process Manual

by Sula J. Rowe

Project Director

August 30, 1981

Blue Mountain Union School

Wells River, Vermont

EC162497

## FOREWORD

This manual has been prepared at the request of the Vermont Department of Education, and is designed to share with the reader the sense of success, as well as the stumbling blocks, experienced by Blue Mt. Union School with competitive Federal grants.

We feel we have learned that the following key elements are essential:

1. The need for the program must not only EXIST, it must be acknowledged by all participants.

2. The carryover, or residual, must be designed to be positive, and not resulting in a backlog of unemployment compensation, unmaintained equipment, or other unaccepted financial or program commitments.

3. A prime "shaker and mover" needs to be identified at each level of the program, with a style compatible with the audience and the level of the program.

Those three elements hardly seem earth-shattering; certainly the word "obvious" comes to mind. Yet we needed to experience the successes, and, yes, the failures created by their presence/absence before we clearly understood these three simple concepts.

We enjoyed our experience, and wish to thank the community, staff, students, and the State Department of Education for the level of success we achieved. We do have in place an on-going program as a result of the Title IV-C grant.

We hope this resource manual will be useful in assisting the reader to also develop and operate a successful program.

A.Keith Ober, Superintendent

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Vermont Department of Education which made our project possible with a grant from the federal E.S.E.A. Title IV-C program, and provided workshops and conferences which helped us learn how to implement our project. I would particularly like to thank Ron Rubin, without whose unfailing support and interest the project would not have kept going, and this manual would never have been written. Ron's assistance and encouragement were invaluable to us, and went far beyond the requirements of his position as Program Consultant.

I would also like to thank Rob Buckley and Brad Ashley, who, as co-directors, were involved in all phases of the project, and who kept me and the project afloat when the going got tough.

A. Keith Ober, Superintendent, and William G. Randall, Principal, of Blue Mountain Union School provided outstanding administrative support and counsel. Without them, the project would have been much more difficult, if not impossible.

And all the teachers and students at Blue Mountain who were creative, cooperative and involved deserve more credit that I can possibly express.

Sula J. Rowe
Project Director

PROJECT GATE insures equal employment, educational opportunities and affirmative action regardless of race, color, creed, handicap, national origin, or sex, in compliance with federal law.

The activity which is the subject of this report was supported in whole or part by the U.S.Department of Education. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S.Department of Education and no official endorsement by the U.S.Department of Education should be inferred.

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Independent Study Handbook

TITLE IV-C PROJECT GATE
(GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION)
BLUE MOUNTAIN UNION SCHOOL
WELLS RIVER, VERMONT


ABSTRACT

Blue Mountain Union School is a small (550 students) rural school in a culturally isolated area. We are concerned with providing our gifted and talented students with sufficient challenge to reduce the rate of atrophy and with preparing them for future competition with students from schools in more urban or more advantaged situations.

We are also a K-12 school and therefore have a unique opportunity to develop an exemplary gifted and talented program that will be continuous throughout a student's school life.

We propose to develop a program that will help the classroom teacher offer gifted and talented students the opportunity to work at the most appropriate speed and level and to prepare them for further study in their chosen field.

The project will have a three-year schedule of development. The focus will be on a different area of the curriculum each year:

| | |
|---|---|
| Year One: | Math, Science, and Business |
| Year Two: | Humanities and Communication |
| Year Three: | Fine and Applied Arts |

In each area we will supply the initial investment in planning, equipment, materials, and staff time necessary to set up a program that will become an integral part of the curriculum and will continue after the three-year project is over. Each area will be carefully coordinated with the others to provide a total program wherein gifted and talented students can use all the resources of the school to further their particular gift or talent, and where elementary and high school students can interact for the benefit of both.

## INTRODUCTION

PROJECT GATE, described in the abstract of our initial grant proposal which is reproduced on page 1, is appropriate for small schools where the same conditions prevail: rural isolation, lack of alternatives in programming, and small numbers of gifted and talented students. It is particularly applicable for districts in which the elementary and secondary schools have ready access to each other. The key elements of this project are flexibility, step-by-step progress, integration of several sources of funding, and extreme cost-effectiveness.

## BACKGROUND

This proposal was submitted and funded in 1978, but it was not the first attempt to provide better education for gifted and talented students at Blue Mountain. During the school year 1976-77, several parents and teachers met with the school administration to discuss programs for talented students. A tentative plan was developed and presented to the school board. The first step in the plan called for a community committee to study various options and make recommendations to the school board by the end of the summer. Nominations for members of this committee were secured from the school board, commitments obtained from the participants, and summer meetings were scheduled. Members included parents, teachers (active and retired), business representatives, and other interested citizens. Lively discussions, ranging from general educational philosophy to very specific questions, characterized the meetings.

Some areas of agreement that emerged were:

- that all programs needed more challenge and interest for each student
- that gifted and talented students need support and approval for their achievements
- that gifted and talented students need opportunities for additional experiences in their special area
- that enrichment activities are important to stimulate talent
- that career planning and counseling were important for all students, but that gifted and talented students have special needs in these areas
- that many existing programs could be modified for individual students if time, materials, and resource persons were provided

The result of these meetings was an over-all Achievement Plan with a specific component for gifted and talented students which was implemented beginning in September 1977.

The program basically consisted of selecting readily identifiable gifted and talented students and assigning them to a faculty advisor so that some progress toward identifying that student's specific needs and modifying the school's program to meet those needs might be made. Limited in scope (we served 8 students, grades 7-12), the program functioned for the year and was superseded by a 7-12 Teacher Advisor system.

The program had these specific ingredients that made it successful: there was active input of ideas from the community, the administration, and the teachers; identification of students and the modification of the school's program were broad-based and flexible; it did not require large amounts of time and money; and it capitalized on existing methods and resources. The focus was on the student, not on the program. What we learned from that program was invaluable when it come to submitting our Title IV-C proposal; what we have learned from our Title IV-C project may be of assistance to others.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

All programs begin with someone's perception of a need. This perception may be based on observed behavior (i.e. bright students dropping out of school), or may simply be a matter of intuition. But before you begin to design a program to meet this need, you must be sure that your perceptions are accurate. There are steps to follow in developing a program, and it is very important not to skip any of them. In the third year of our project, pressed by application deadlines and too much else to do, we skipped steps one and two, and it caused us many subsequent problems.

The steps are these:

1. verify your perceptions by gathering information, seeking the opinions of others, and reading professional material
2. talk with many people to enlist support and to gather further information and ideas
3. articulate your goals (state the need as corrected)
4. establish your objectives (the specific results for which you will aim)
5. discuss activities (strategies designed to make progress toward your objectives)
6. decide how to implement your ideas
7. set up an evaluation procedure

The needs assessment should be the strongest part of any program. If you can accurately identify needs, then you have a good basis for planning a successful program. The Needs Assessment for our project, reproduced on the following pages, illustrates clearly articulated needs firmly grounded in factual data.

PROJECT GATE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1. BASED ON OUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM INITIATED ON A LIMITED SCALE THIS PAST YEAR, WE FIND A NEED FOR TIME FOR THE TEACHERS TO INTRODUCE A HIGH LEVEL OF INDIVIDUALIZATION IN THE CURRENT MATH AND SCIENCE CURRICULUM. This experience has borne out the conclusion of many studies which show that gifted and talented students who are not challenged may drop out of school or show little interest in their classes by the time they reach junior or senior status. Two out of three juniors and seniors identified at Blue Mountain as gifted and talented in the fall of 1977 have either dropped out or are failing in one or more courses. It is apparent that we are not providing that challenge, especially in the areas of math and science. In these areas, fifty percent of all the students identified as gifted and talented are capable of working further and faster than the class as a whole if the material were structured so they could progress on an independent basis.

2. BASED ON AN INFORMAL SURVEY OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS IDENTIFIED TO DATE, WE FIND A NEED FOR ADDITIONAL COURSE OFFERINGS COMMENSURATE WITH THEIR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE. Sixty-eight percent of these students have specific interests which will require courses not currently offered in the general science, math and business curriculum at Blue Mountain if they are to enter higher education in the area their gift and/or talent indicates. The course most often identified as needed is basic computer skills.

On February 2, 1978, eight students from Blue Mountain visited the computer center at South Burlington High School. All these students had previously expressed a strong interest in computers and three are currently part of the gifted and talented program. The younger students were enthusiastic about the possibilities that exist with a computer system, but two seniors, both advanced math students, were dismayed to think that next year they will be competing with other college freshmen who have had as much as four years of computer experience. Their disadvantage in this area could easily take a year of college to overcome and would contribute to the problems of adjustment that students from small rural schools like Blue Mountain frequently encounter.

In addition, a survey of the U.S.Department of Labor Occupational Outlook Handbook: 1976-77 shows 138 of the 300 occupations listed, or 64%, require direct knowledge of computer usage or training in areas affected by the computer explosion. Undoubtedly further

advances in technology will rapidly bring the computer to even more occupations. Assuming these are occupations that the average student could enter, the importance of skilled, creative computer usage to the gifted and talented is evident.

3. BASED ON A SURVEY OF TEACHER BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE, WE FIND A NEED FOR TEACHER TRAINING IN AWARENESS OF COMPUTER-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND IN BASIC COMPUTER TECHNIQUES. Computer literacy has been recognized by the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics as one of the ten basic skill areas. To quote from their "Position Statement of Basic Skills" (Mathematics, Teacher, February 1978, p.50:

> It is important for all citizens to understand what computers can and cannot do. Students should be aware of the many uses of computers in society, such as their use in teaching-learning, financial transactions; and information storage and retrieval. The "mystique" surrounding computers is disturbing and can put persons with no understanding of computers at a disadvantage. The increasing use of computers by government, industry and business demands an awareness of computer uses and limitations.

Obviously, teachers must have this awareness if they are to pass it on to the students and if they are to guide gifted and talented students in effective learning programs.

Further training for a limited number of teachers in basic computer skills is necessary to assure that the program does not depend solely on one person.

4. MANY STUDIES OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS INDICATE A NEED FOR INTERACTION WITH THEIR INTELLECTUAL PEERS. At Blue Mountain, the number of students possibly participating in the gifted and talented program is estimated at 5-10% of the total K-12 population of 570 students, or approximately 57 students spread over a wide range of chronological ages and areas of giftedness. Opportunities for interaction with intellectual peers are extremely limited by the daily schedule which tends to group students by chronological age.

You can see that we used all of the following kinds of information to verify our perception of the needs of our students:

- attendance records
- classroom performance
- teacher observation
- verbal surveys
- student expression of satisfaction/dissatisfaction
- occupational statistics
- written surveys
- information from professional reading

Thus, our perceptions were verified at a general level (national and state trends), at a local level (conditions in our school), and at an individual level (requirements of specific students).

## GOALS

Goals and objectives are difficult for most people to write, and are easily confused with each other, as well as with activities. Some of this confusion can be avoided by following the steps for developing a program in sequence, and by clear definitions of what goals are, what objectives are, and what activities are.

Goals restate the need you perceived, as corrected. Goals are broad statements that apply to the whole project, regardless of the length of time it operates or the emphases of its specific parts. Our goals, when we finally found them sometime during the second year, were embodied in the introduction to our original proposal:

GOAL I: To provide gifted and talented students with sufficient challenge to reduce the rate of atrophy and to prepare them for future competition with students from schools in more urban or maore advantaged situations.

GOAL II: To develop a program that will help the classroom teacher offer gifted and talented students the opportunity to work at the most appropriate speed and level.

GOAL III: To develop a program that will be continuous throughout a student's school life, and to design the program so that it will become an integral part of the curriculum.

One way to distinguish goals from objectives and activities is to ask yourself; "Why will we do this?" "For what purpose?" If your answer is the same or simply rephrases the statement in question, chances are you have a goal. If your answer differs, chances are you have an objective or an activity.

If you apply this question to our second and third goals, you will find that they are actually activities that will be undertaken for the purpose of realizing Goal I; however, we felt it was important to state them as goals. In this sense, they can be seen as qualifying goals: we will realize Goal I in this manner.

## OBJECTIVES

Objectives are statements of the results for which you will aim. Success can then be stated in terms of how much progress you have made toward your objectives. Notice I said "how much progress you make toward", not "how close you come".

And, of course, your objectives in order to be measured must be stated in terms of things that are measurable. Some people use the word observable: both mean the same thing.

In our proposal, we had twenty-three objectives, most of which were actually activities or strategies for implementation. I will list a few to give you a sample of what they were like:

To explore the application of computers to the Humanities.

To develop individualized programs for current course offerings in Math and Science.

To provide materials for teachers in developing individualized units.

To develop dramatic skills of gifted and talented students.

Looking back, I see we could have done it with five, all of which state what will happen, to what degree, and for how many students:

1. All gifted and talented students will be able to work at their own speed and level in any currently offered course.

2. All gifted and talented students will be able to take computer programming and/or any other course not currently offered, on an independent basis.

3. All gifted and talented students will have opportunities to interact with gifted and talented students of other ages and/or from other schools.

4. All gifted and talented students will have a program of study that will discover and develop individual skills and will increase self-motivation and delf-discipline.

5. All gifted and talented students will receive career planning and counseling suitable for their special needs.

Using these objectives, it is easy to see how to answer the questions "How will I know when my objectives have been achieved? What will students be doing/not doing?"

## IMPLEMENTATION

Every project needs a prime mover, a universally accepted need, and a willing body of participants. Regardless of where you plan to get your support, the work you have already done will allow you to present your ideas in an organized manner and to show what implementation of these ideas will accomplish for the students in your school. In other words: what is the rationale for initiating such a project, who will be responsible for administering and evaluating the project, and what results can the sponsoring body expect for their money.

There are many alternative models for designing a program for gifted and talented students. Our initial reaction was that if we were to have an ideal program, a gifted and innovative teacher who would have ample resources would take all the gifted and talented students and provide them with a really challenging, high-powered education. Unfortunately, it isn't as simple as that. Philosophically and practically that model didn't fit. It discounts the very real horror students feel at any sort of separation or distinction from their peers. It ignores the fact that not all students are gifted in all things, and that there are several different types of giftedness, not all served equally well by the same curriculum. It doesn't allow for the development of gifted students as well-rounded individuals, and deprives them of the contributions of other students.

In addition, at Blue Mountain, we were concerned with designing a program that would continue after the project was over, and that would be continuous for a student from kindergarten until graduation.

We had to plan for it to continue with no budget, and no additional personnel. Therefore, we had to use existing methods and resources, and insinuate our program into the daily operation of the school so that much of it would function independently.

Given these criteria, it was immediately apparent that we were talking about changing attitudes, changing methods of classroom management, adapting programs and curriculum to meet individual needs, and involving as many people as possible in the implementation of the project.

Sharing the work and responsibility was also a necessity for people who already had full-time jobs doing something else. We decided that in addition to the over-all project director, a co-director would be added each year who was directly involved in the area of the curriculum on which the project was to focus.

The project director was responsible for keeping records, handling necessary paper-work, and coordinating the project. As a co-director, the project director worked with the other co-directors designing and implementing activities, gathering evaluation and needs assessment data, participating in planning, providing teacher inservice programs, and working directly with individual students.

Co-directors helped verify perceptions, generate ideas, and provided enthusiasm, constructive criticism, impetus and inspiration. They broadened the support base of the project by talking to more people, differently.

Again, in Year Three, we failed to appoint a co-director for that year; and the co-director who had worked during Year Two had left the district. This left the project director and the co-director from Year One with too much to do and too little time in which to do it.

The positive side of this arrangement of co-directors is not only to share the work and responsibility, but by involving more people in the operation of the project the chances of continuation and success are increased. The danger is that without someone's full-time attention the project will founder or get lost. It is crucial to establish priorities at the beginning, to build in routine matters as much as possible, and to limit paper-work and record keeping to absolute essentials: to remember to focus on the student, not on the program.

## ACTIVITIES

An activity must be viewed as a means of making progress toward an objective and not as an end in itself. If a planned activity isn't working - - i.e. if it becomes apparent that progress will not be made toward an objective - - then the activity should be modified, or even changed completely. In an innovative (experimental) project, not everything is expected to work, and it is as important to find out what does not work, and why, as it is to find what does.

What follows is a list of the activities we chose to implement, a brief description of each, and an indication of whether we feel the activity was a success or not.

## PROJECT GATE ACTIVITIES

Independent Learning Units: allowed gifted and talented students to progress through currently offered courses at their own pace. Successful.

Identification & Record Keeping: devised various forms as the philosophy and direction of the program evolved. Successful.

Computer Programming: High school students tutored elementary students in the use of computers. Not successful.

Student Tutoring: High school students worked with elementary students who were ahead of their class under the supervision of the classroom teacher. Successful.

Community Achievement Program Advisory Committee: Parents, teachers, and community members who met to discuss issues and plans. Successful.

Cultural Enrichment: Advisory Committee members generated a list of cultural events in the surrounding area and offered to provide transportation for students to these events. Not successful.

After School Seminars: Discussions by and for teachers, students, and community members on specific topics, such as "Life After Life" and "Nuclear Power: Pro & Con". Not successful.

Honors Seminar: Offered once a week for one block to gifted and talented students of all ages with readings and discussions on a specific topic, "Cortez and the Conquest of Mexico". Students were responsible for classwork missed in order to attend the seminar. Not successful.

Teacher Inservice: Identification of gifted and talented students, designing independent study programs, differentiating classroom curriculum to accommodate gifted and talented students, "Teaching as a Performing Art". Mixed results.

Drama Production: involved students, teachers, community members, and parents in all facets of theater production. Successful.

Independent Study: a structure and a manual for designing and implementing courses not currently part of the curriculum, including a senior honors thesis. Successful.

Incentive Grants: money for materials, instruction, or equipment for specific projects planned by individual gifted and talented students. Successful.

Community Mentors: community members whose talent is in a particular field work outside of school with gifted and talented students whose interest is in the same field. Successful.

In addition to the activities you design, it is very important to be aware and take advantage of other activities, resources, and programs in your school and else where. Often students need a little encouragement or assistance to take part in activities that may mean a great deal to them. We drew on many resources that contributed immensely to the success of our project. Following is a partial list:

Vermont Council on the Arts Touring Artists

Vermont Council on the Arts Poets-in-the-Schools

numerous conferences & workshops for teachers on many subjects

Dartmouth Humanities Institute

Hopkins Center Cultural Events

Lyndon State College Cultural Events

Baldwin Memorial Library Program

Blue Mountain English Curriculum Committee

Vocational Exploration & Career Development for Gifted Students by the Vermont Dept. of Education at Vermont Technical College

Blue Mountain Teacher Advisor Program

Northern New England Junior Science & Humanities Symposium University of New Hampshire

Regional Center for Educational Training

Vermont Department of Education RAP Agent Program

Sustained Silent Reading Program

Cooperative Learning Workshops

Upper Valley Math League

resources of Blue Mountain's Garvin Library

Blue Mountain's DUO Program

Blue Mountain's Work Study Program

## EVALUATION

There are really two different types of evaluation. There is active, continuous evaluation to check that progress toward the objectives is being made and to allow for change and modification in the project's activities if it is not; and there is retrospective evaluation done on completion of the project, or each phase thereof, to assess and report results. Many evaluative indicators are the same as those used to conduct the needs assessment. In fact, one year's needs assessment may also be the previous year's evaluation assessment, since the evaluative data you gather will be used to measure your progress toward the objectives.

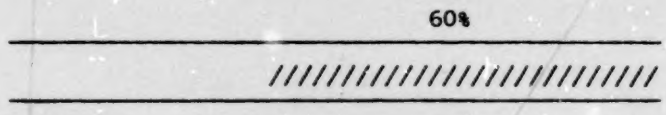
These are some of the evaluative indicators we used:

- numbers of participants successfully completing an activity
- numbers of individual programs successfully developed
- increased indications of interest in the program and activities
- evaluation forms for workshops, programs (written surveys)
- awareness surveys (verbal surveys)
- teacher observations
- student/teacher expressions of satisfaction/dissatisfaction
- classroom performance
- library circulation records
- attendance records
- evidence of student achievements

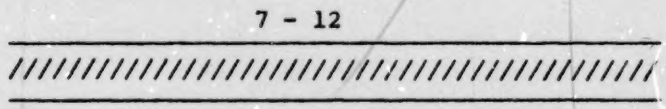
On the next page are our objectives, and based on the information collected above, our assessment of how much progress we made toward those objectives during the three years of our Title IV-C project.

## PROJECT GATE EVALUATION

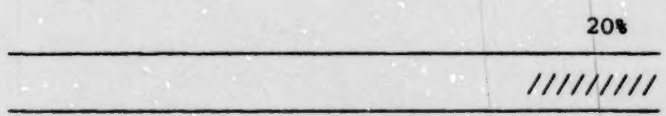
1. All gifted and talented students will be able to work at their own speed and level in any currently offered course.



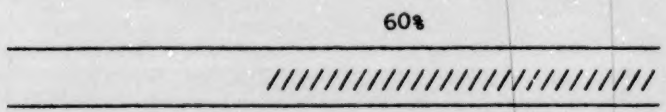

2. All gifted and talented students will be able to take computer programming and/or any other course not currently offered, on an independent basis.



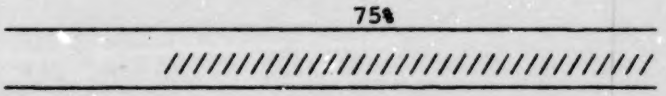

3. All gifted and talented students will have opportunities to interact with gifted and talented students of other ages and/or from other schools.




4. All gifted and talented students will have a program of study that will discover and develop individual skills and will increase self-motivation and self-discipline.




5. All gifted and talented students will receive career planning and counseling suitable for their special needs.



## IN RETROSPECT

The process of implementing the Title IV-C project has been one of continual learning for us. What we learned caused us to change course, often in mid-stream, and if the changes caused chaos in terms of our project plan, we feel they were justified as changes in strategy in order to make more progress toward the desired results.

It is ironic that one of the first things we did in terms of teacher inservice was to pass out a questionnaire designed to ascertain whether or not teachers held misconceptions about gifted students. Predictably, they did, and on a very basic level; but it took us most of the project to discover that we harbored misconceptions of our own on a far deeper level. The history of our project is a record of a trial and error procedure, and all of our problems and unsuccessful attempts at activities can be traced back to a failure to follow the steps for developing a program, or to these misconceptions.

### Misconception #1

Gifted students can and should be identified.

On the next page is a copy of "A Vermont Definition of Gifted and Talented". This definition lists six areas of giftedness or talent, and we discovered that each area requires radically different methods of identification, and radically different solutions to the needs of the students in each area. Gradually we come to the conclusion that what we should be identifying were educational needs, not obvious or potential gifts and talents.

A VERMONT DEFINITION OF

GIFTED AND TALENTED

GIFTED AND TALENTED CHILDREN WHO BY VIRTUE OF OUTSTANDING ABILITIES, ARE CAPABLE OF HIGH PERFORMANCE, AS IDENTIFIED BY PROFESSIONALLY QUALIFIED PERSON. THESE ARE CHILDREN WHO REQUIRE DIFFERENTIATED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND/OR SERVICES BEYOND THOSE NORMALLY PROVIDED BY THE REGULAR SCHOOL PROGRAM IN ORDER TO REALIZE THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO SELF AND SOCIETY.

CHILDREN CAPABLE OF HIGH PERFORMANCE INCLUDE THOSE WITH DEMONSTRATED ACHIEVEMENT AND/OR POTENTIAL ABILITY IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS, SINGLY OR IN COMBINATION:

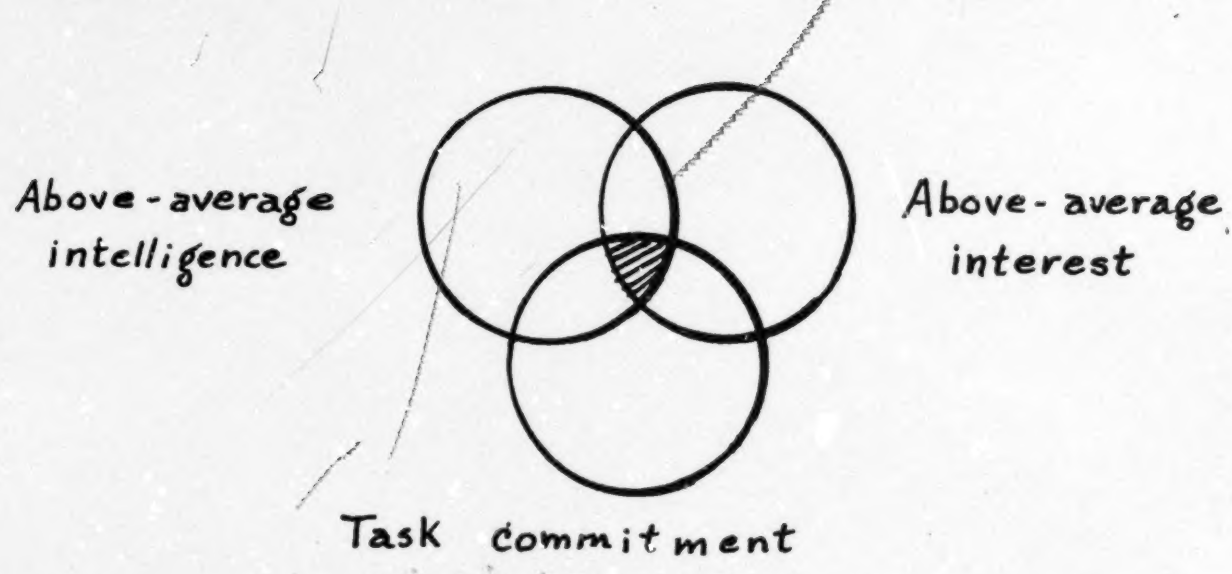
1. GENERAL INTELLECTUAL ABILITY
2. SPECIFIC ACADEMIC APTITUDE
3. CREATIVE OR PRODUCTIVE THINKING
4. LEADERSHIP ABILITY
5. VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS
6. PSYCHOMOTOR ABILITY

Identifying and meeting educational needs avoids many of the criticisms with which gifted and talented programs have been faced: children are not "labeled"; there is no problem with elitism; and the probability of mistaking high achievement for giftedness is minimized.

The key is in the definition: "These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program . . .". These are the children, in other words, for whom the normal classroom is not suitable. If a child is doing well and is happy in the normal classroom, it would be a disservice to take that child out. Overachieving is much more prevalent than underachieving; the child who is overachieving already is not in need of additional challenge.

If, however, a child is a behavior problem, chances are that the normal classroom is not meeting the needs of that child. Not all children are behavior problems because they are unchallenged, but misbehavior is an indication that needs are not being met, and more often than is widely suspected the reason is boredom.

This seems to be the place to mention Josepn Renzulli's work at the University of Connecticut, for while his "revolving door" model was not applicable to our school, his shifts in philosophy parallel our own. He found that manifestations of giftedness have less to do with IQ or achievement than they do with a combination of three attributes occuring in the same child at the same time.




At the time when these attributes come together in a child, an alert teacher will provide an opportunity for that child to participate in an activity which will allow the child to pursue an interest or develop a talent. Renzulli poses three questions concerning proposed activities for gifted students that help distinguish between meeting an educational need and conferring a special privilege:

1. Did every child do it?
2. Could every child do it?
3. Would every child want to do it?

All of these questions should be answered "NO" .

If we apply these questions to our unsuccessful Computer Tutoring activity, we can see why we were in trouble. Every elementary student in the school was probably capable of operating the computers, and worse, every one of them wanted to.

Misconception #2

Bored, intelligent students are only waiting for opportunities and will participate in anything interesting.

Contrary to the stereotype, gifted students are not usually the typical "bookworm". They are, particularly in a small school, those students who are involved in everything. They generally carry a heavy class load, and may have the potential but lack the skills for self-directed learning. Their outside interests are extremely individual. Add-on, enrichment activities and classes, however interesting, mean more time and more work. Just as the student who finishes ten math problems well before everyone else in the class is apt to resent getting ten more of the same, these students tend to view extras as punishment for being smart.

In addition, they have inevitably encountered the prejudice and suspicion that surrounds intelligence in our culture, and will hold back and wait to see how an activity is going to proceed before becoming involved.

We can trace to this misconception the failure of our Cultural Enrichment Program, our After School Seminars, and our Honors Seminar.

Misconception #3

Teachers, once they are aware of the needs of gifted students, will develop strategies for meeting those needs.

Gifted students need individualized instruction, an open and accepting teacher, and a stimulating environment. It is an understatement to say that gifted students are frequently not a joy to teach. They can be difficult and demanding, and most teachers don't have the time

or the energy to create individualized programs and provide a stimulating environment. Those who try often succumb to the phenomenon known as "burn-out".

There is an old saying that "teachers tend to teach as they were taught", and there aren't very many models for conducting a classroom that takes into account the individual needs of a wide variety of students. American education is, as usual, attempting to do something that has not been done before, and few people are imaginative enough to blaze their own trails without instruction and without role models.

Morevoer, the term individualized instruction is equated with independent study far too often. Independent study is only one way to individualize, or differentiate, the instruction, and ought never to be the only way. Gifted students need a balance of independent work and interaction with others if they are to become well-rounded individuals. More important, constructing an independent study that does not take into account the level of the student's self-direction dooms it to failure from the beginning. How many adults can successfully complete a correspondence course or generate and follow a plan of self-study?

If we had understood all this from the start our teacher inservice program could have been a good deal more effective.

Misconception #4

> Teachers who are already doing a good job with gifted students know it.

Good teachers tend to hold themselves more accountable than most, and tend to emphasize the "one that got away" rather than the majority

who were successfully taught. Good teachers also tend to feel that a new program will call for new and spectacular effort and fail to see that they may already be doing much of what is needed. By directing money first to the area of the greatest need, we were in a sense rewarding failure rather than success. Certainly the teachers whose area was left until last did not take it as a compliment to the success of their programs.

Leaving them out of the planning process did nothing to correct this impression, and in retrospect it is easy to see why the third year of our project was marred by a pervasive lack of cooperation, why the program as planned did not meet real needs, and why there was a need for much changing of strategies before the project got off the ground and made progress toward our objectives.

## Misconception #5

Publicity is not good for our project.

From the beginning we were not comfortable with labeling our "gifted" students, and consequently did very little to disseminate information about our project either inside or outside the school. One result was that teachers didn't know much about what we were trying to do, and identified knowledge about the project as a high priority need in a survey concerning teacher inservice. Another result was that in the third year of our project the superintendent received anonymously a clipping of an article about gifted and talented students and a note which said, "Please take time to read. This type of child may exist at Blue Mountain Union School".

We have not reached any satisfactory solution to this problem.

## WHAT WILL CONTINUE ?

There is a basic awareness of the needs of gifted and talented students among many of the teachers. Many adaptations of activities responding to the needs of these students have been quietly incorporated into several classrooms. We will continue to have inservice programs for teachers, particularly those new to the system, and the librarian will continue to function as a resource person for teachers who are looking for ways to meet the needs of students in their classes.

Responsibility for coordinating the gifted and talented services is written into the job description for Director of the Media Center. Included in the budget is a salary for this additional responsibility similar to that paid to the yearbook advisor, or to coaches of athletics. On page 26 is a list of the duties of this position.

The process of identifying potential needs of students functions well. Questions designed to alert us to potential needs are included on the enrollment form for new students, and a checklist of characteristics is distributed to the teachers in the pre-school/primary area each year.

Computer Programming has become an integral part of the math curriculum, 7-12, and will undoubtedly expand as its usefullness becomes more and more apparent.

Independent Study is well on its way to becoming a necessary and respected part of the curriculum.

The Teacher Advisor Program continues to operate and provides a way to deliver individualized counseling to all students, since no teacher has more than ten or twelve advisees, and meets with them daily.

Interest in reading continues to increase as indicated by the enthusiasm for the Sustained Silent Reading Program, the number of students interested in the Independent Reading Course, library circulation that exceeded 33,000 volumes last year, and increased requested for lists of recommended books from students, teachers, and parents.

There is an emphasis on and an increased awareness of academic excellence. An alternative teacher's group, formed toward the end of last year as a vehicle for providing professional input on educational issues, has already encouraged the school board to adopt stiffer standards for the honor roll. Other issues this group intends to address are teacher evaluation, orientation for new teachers, revising school publications, establishing a professional idea exchange, discipline, student services, and parent-teacher relationships. There is a trend toward involving parents in the educational process, and growing numbers of parents who wish to become involved.

Not all of these programs are the direct outcome of the gifted and talented project, but the existence of the project has provided added impetus for all of them, and in turn their existence has increased the effectiveness of the project.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Director of Gifted and Talented Education

Blue Mountain Union School

Attend all curriculum meetings as an advocate for gifted and talented students

Identify educational needs of gifted and talented students

Confer with teachers to help meet those needs

Review current literature on gifted and talented education and share with teachers as appropriate

Keep necessary records

Represent school at state gifted and talented functions

Conduct at least one inservice workshop per year on gifted and talented education

Arrange mentors and/or special programs for gifted and talented students

Monitor progress of gifted and talented students in special programs

Offer assistance to parents of gifted and talented students

Maintain a file of special opportunities for gifted and talented students and share this information as appropriate

Encourage gifted and talented students to pursue higher education in thier field of interest

Administer or help administer grant programs developed to meet the needs of gifted and talented students

INSERVICE ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS

GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

GOALS:

1. To provide teachers with knowledge and techniques for identifying the educational needs of gifted and talented students in their classroom.

2. To provide teachers with at least one technique for varying their teaching style to accommodate gifted and talented students in the regular classroom.

3. To provide teachers with a model for designing independent study programs to neet the needs of gifted and talented students in their classroom.

Teachers are notoriously poor at identifying gifted and talented students and assessing their educational needs. Why is the record of teachers in this task so poor? Perhaps it is because the kinds of behaviors valued in a classroom are poor indicators of giftedness, and the kinds of information collected by schools are poor indicators of giftedness.

What skills are needed to help teachers improve? They need to observe behaviors; recognize that positive characteristics can result in negative behaviors; and remember that overachieving (exceeding predictable potential) is much more prevalent than underachieving.

Activity #1: Characteristics of Gifted and Talented Students

Objective: All teachers will be able to identify positive and negative behaviors of students who may have need of a differentiated program by reason of demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability.

Materials: List of positive characteristics. (page 28)

Directions: Explore with teachers negative classroom behaviors that may be observed as manifestations of these characteristics. List them on the board.

Discussion: Use the following questions to stimulate discussion.

What behaviors are good indications of giftedness?
What behaviors are not good indications of giftedness?

CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

1. Learns rapidly and easily.

2. Is highly imaginative. Is less inclined to follow the organization and ideas of others.

3. Has a high degree of curiosity. Asks many questions. Is interested in a wide range of things.

4. Has keen powers of observation and is alert.

5. Reasons things out, thinks clearly, recognizes relationships, comprehends meanings.

6. Has longer attention and interest span.

7. Can often form generalizations and use them in new situations.

8. Has greater than average ability to grasp abstract concepts and see abstract relationships.

9. Has a large vocabulary which is used easily and accurately.

10. Retains what has been heard or read without much rote drill.

11. Enjoys reading, usually at a mature level.

12. Follows directions easily.

13. Has a good sense of humor.

14. Can use material, words or ideas in new ways.

15. Has a strong desire to excel.

16. Uses a great deal of common sense and practical knowledge.

17. Is a leader in several kinds of activities. Is often asked ideas and suggestions. Is looked to by others when something must be decided.

Identification serves no purpose unless it results in provision of the qualitatively differentiated instruction gifted children need. If a teacher can begin to meet the educational needs of gifted and talented students, negative manifestations of characteristics can be replaced by positive behaviors, and the teacher as well as the student will benefit.

Activity #2: Varying Classroom Instruction

Objective: All teachers will be able to develop a unit for their classroom that will include learning experiences at each level of Bloom's taxonomy.

Materials: List of cue words. (page 30)

Directions: Ask teachers to list six to ten questions of varying difficulty for a unit recently taught in their classroom.

Pass out list of cue words. Explain that questions can be categorized into classifications according to Bloom's Taxonomy and ask teachers to check their questions against the list to determine what categories of learning they represent.

Discussion: Point out that most teachers and most textbooks rely on (1) knowledge and (5) evaluation; and that there are hard and easy questions possible in each category.

Give them time to rewrite their questions. Ask for an easy and a difficult example in each category.

Use these questions to stimulate discussions:

Do you think this is a useful classroom technique? Why?

Are there other applications than testing?

What do you think the reaction of students will be to new types of questions?

What do you think would happen if you gave a test of all one kind of questions one week and a test of all another kind of questions the next week? Would the same students do well on both tests?

# DEVELOPING QUESTIONS WITH "CUE" WORDS

based upon: Sanders, Norris, CLASSROOM QUESTIONS
New York: Harper, 1966

## 1. KNOWLEDGE (Memory)

State
Does
Who?
When?
What?
Where?
Name
Write
What are?
What answer?
Tell
How many?
Define
Which one?
What is?
Spell
Check
What formula?
List
With what?
Can you remember?
Describe
Identify

## 2. COMPREHENSION (Translate/Interpret)

List characteristics
What things are alike?
How would you describe?
Relate
Compare
Distinguish between
Describe how you feel
What do you deduce?
hat are your reactions?
How can we judge?
Show
What do you infer?
Tell why
Arrive at a decision through
Give you opinion
Summarize
Find the evidence
Try to prove
Interpret
How are these common?
Discuss all the ways
What is different?
Rearrange
Are there certain phrases?
Is there another solution?
Compare and contrast
Restate; reconstruct
Explore Organize

## 3. APPLICATION

Analyze: Apply

What conclusion?
Form an hypothesis
Show cause, effect
Discover
Search for
How can you start?
Find
List the steps
Explore
What is necessary?
Under what circumstances
Have you experienced?
Explain
How do you use it?
Classify
The facts are
The evidence is
What are all the problems?
The accepted meaning
Illustrate
What comes first?
Make use of
The record shows
Demonstrate
Arrange
What are the causes?
What are the consequences?
In what ways?
How could
Specify conditions of
Discuss some of

## 4. ANALYSIS SYNTHESIS

Create

Suppose
Design
Compose
Imagine
Speculate
Devise
What do you think?
What do you suggest?
What is possible?
Take a guess
Are there alternatives?
How many different ways?
What would it be like?
What would happen if?
Think of a new approach
What might you use
How would it feel?
Make a way to explain
Think of an unique system
Solve this
How many new ways?

## 5. EVALUATE

Argue all sides
Will it work?
Define your position
Evaluate 3 forms
Was it wrong?
How would you rate?
What is your understanding?
According to what happened?
Challenge this statement
What conclusion?
Is it good?
Rate in order of your preference
Judge by the facts you know
Evaluate by this set of standards
Does this solve the problem?
Is there a better solution?
Can this be done differently?
Why is it bad?
Which do you like best?
Choose the one best example
What will succeed?
Check the results to prove your point
How do you rate it?

## INDEPENDENT STUDY

In any small school the lack of electives is a serious problem, particularly for gifted and talented students. Independent study used judiciously, is one way of increasing the nember of electives and at the same time providing for the individual interests of students. In the elementary school it can provide a suitable level of work for the student who doesn't fit into any of the regular "groups". In the past, these students have been "skipped" one or more grade levels in an effort to provide a suitable level of work, but except in rare cases, it seems better to keep them with children of their own age and individualize their program. A third grader, for example, who is reading on a ninth grade level, will not be much better off skipped to the fourth grade.

Independent study, unless it is a separate course, ought to be "instead of" rather than "in addition to". Expecting gifted and talented students to do all of the regular class work as well as special projects is, as I said, punishing them for being gifted. Assess their level of skill in each subject, and excuse them from doing work they already know how to do in order to give them time to work on their own.

Individualizing a student's program, as I also said before, does not mean providing independent study for all subjects. Gifted and talented students risk isolation from their peers under normal circumstances; a totally independent program reinforces this isolation, and may contribute to a student's problems. Using other means for differentiation, and incorporating the independent study into the classroom at every possible opportunity will help.

Activity #3: Independent Study Programs

Objective: All teachers will be able to design an independent study program that includes the five components of a successful program.

Materials: Independent Study Handbook (Appendix)

Directions: Ask teachers to design an effective independent study program, including the five components of all successful independent study programs and provision for assessing and working with the student(s) level of self-direction. Or present a sample program and ask them to assess it in terms of these characteristics.

Discussion: Ask if anyone can share an experience with independent study. If the experience was successful, ask if they can analyze the reasons. If it was unsuccessful, ask if they can now see why.

Explore applications of independent study to elementary grades.

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# INDEPENDENT STUDY HANDBOOK

BLUE MOUNTAIN UNION SCHOOL

WELLS RIVER, VERMONT

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Blue Mountain Union School

Independent study provides students with the opportunity to earn credit for learning experiences not offered in the regular program of studies or to take a course which is offered but is in conflict with their individual schedule. Independent study enables the school to enrich the curriculum, offers a change of pace for both students and teachers, and provides a setting for encouraging, stimulating and motivating creativity and originality. There are four types of Independent Study at Blue Mountain:

Type I: An established course, scheduled independently. The contract for Type I will be accompanied by a course description which lists the competencies required of the regular class. Grades will be based on mastery of these competencies, and will be numerical.

Type II: Advanced work, scheduled with a regular class. The contract for Type II will be accompanied by a course description which lists the competencies above and beyond the regular class. Grades will be based on these competencies, and will be numerical with advanced status indicated on the report card.

Type III: Teacher-originated Independent study. The contract for Type III will be accompanied by a course description which includes goals and abjectives. Grades will be based on progress toward the objectives and may be numerical or Credit/No Credit. For a list of these see the current Program of Study.

Type IV: Student-originated Independent study. The contract for Type IV will be accompanied by a student-developed learning plan which includes goals and objectives. Grading will be based on progress toward these objectives and will be Credit/No Credit.

Independent study can be taken only by students in grades 11 and 12, except by special permission of the Independent Study Coordinator.

Independent study is not for everyone, because becoming a self-directed, independent learner is not easy. There are several things

that must be considered before a student decides to pursue an independent study. Answering the following questions honestly will help a student determine his/her ability to pursue an independent study:

1. How many free periods do you have?
2. Are you involved in extra-curricular activities?
3. Independent study is the equivalent of a full-time class and involves an equivalent amount of work, Are you sure you have the time needed to complete your independent study successfully?
4. Can you trust yourself to work without close supervision?
5. Do you stick to a job until it is finished?
6. Are you clear about what you want to do, and why?

If you answered "yes" to these questions, you are probably a good candidate for independent study. If you said "no" to some of these questions, give the idea of independent study more thought and discuss it with a teacher, teacher-advisor, counselor, or parent.

HOW TO SIGN UP FOR AN INDEPENDENT STUDY

1. Contact your teacher and obtain approval before registration.
2. Include independent study on your registration form. Any independent study courses initiated after registration will require an "add" slip.
3. Contract forms and general rules are included in the back of this handbook and additional copies are available in the main office. Teachers should review the general rules with students.
4. The contract must be completed and approved by the Independent Study Coordinator before you start the course.
5. Course descriptions or learning plans must be submitted to the Independent Study Coordinator before the end of the two week drop/add period.

## DESIGNING AN INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAM

All independent study programs, to be successful, must include these five components:

1. student interest and input
2. appropriate learning strategies
3. an opportunity to use what is learned
4. an opportunity to communicate what is learned
5. continual progress toward self-directed learning

It is necessary in every independent study program to assess the student's level of self-direction, and to design a program that begins at that level and works to increase it. The abilities or skills of a self-directed learner are quite different from those needed in teacher-directed learning. Most students have the potential for self-directed learning, but lack the skills.

### SKILLS FOR LEARNING

| Teacher-Directed | Self-Directed |
|---|---|
| to listen attentively | to organize learning efficiently |
| to take careful notes | to identify learning resources |
| to read well | to develop learning strategies |
| to predict what the teacher wants | to produce evidence of accomplishment |

Notice that the four types of independent study require an increasing level of self-direction on the part of the student, and that self-evaluation is a skill requiring the highest level of self-direction.

The process of designing an independent study program is similar to that of designing any curriculum, or to writing a grant proposal. These are the steps to follow:

1. determine the need and verify that need
2. enlist support and gather further information and ideas
3. articulate your goals (state the need as corrected)
4. establish your objectives (the specific results for which you will aim)
5. choose activities (strategies designed to make progress toward your objectives)
6. set up evaluation procedures

NEEDS ASSESSMENT: This includes determining the curriculum area in which the independent study will be offered, and assessing the entry level of the student(s) both in terms of CONTENT (subject matter) and PROCESS (level of self-direction).

Levels of Self-direction in Needs Assessment

| I | II | III | IV |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher assesses entry level | Teacher assesses but provides some choices | Student & teacher use diagnostic conference | Student determines level, consults teacher |

GOALS: Goals are broad general statements that restate the need as corrected. A goal provides an answer to the question, "Why will I do this? For what purpose?"

OBJECTIVES: Objectives are statements of the results for which you will aim. They complete the sentence: "When my independent study is completed I will be able to _____". Success of the program can then be stated in terms of how much progress you have made toward your objectives. Of course, in order to measure progress, your objectives must be stated in measurable terms. And because you are dealing with both content and process, you will have objectives to measure progress in both areas.

Levels of Self-Direction in Setting Goals and Objectives

| I | II | III | IV |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher prescribes | Teacher provides some choices | Student is involved in creating options | Student determines options, teacher provides advice. |

ACTIVITIES: Activities are strategies designed to make progress toward your objectives. They must be appropriate for the student and for the content of the independent study, and must include opportunities to use and communicate what is learned. Activities may be as diverse as working through a programmed text or developing and carrying out a scientific experiment; taking a correspondence course or planning and creating an original piece of art. Reports are generally not a good activity unless there is an additional reason or reasons for doing them. One educator characterized reports as "moving dead bones from one graveyard to another".

## Levels of Self-direction in Choosing Appropriate Activities

| I | II | III | IV |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher presents content, provides exercises & supervises practice | Teacher provides options & allows for individual pacing | Teacher provides resources & options, involves student in decisions of scope, sequence & pace. | Student defines projects in terms of scope, sequence and pace |

EVALUATIONS: There are really two kinds of evaluation. There is active, continuous evaluation to insure that progress toward the objectives is being made, and to provide an opportunity for changes and modifications if it is not; and retrospective evaluation, done on completion of a project, or at the end of each marking period, to assess and report results. And because your objectives are concerned with both content and process, your evaluation must be, too.

Different types of evidence are required for assessing progress toward different objectives. The examples below may help you decide what kinds of evidence you will collect:

### Knowledge & Understanding

Reports of acquired knowledge in essays, examinations, oral presentations, demonstrations, and audiovisual presentations; use of knowledge in problem-solving activities, proposals for projects, research projects with conclusions and recommendations.

### Skills

Performance exercises and demonstrations with ratings by observers: Products which show student achievement.

### Attitudes & Values

Rating scales, changes in recorded behavior (attendance, etc.), and feedback from observers.

## Levels of Self-direction in Evaluation

| I | II | III | IV |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher evaluates, gives grades. | Teacher relates evaluation to objectives, gives student opportunity to respond | Student & teacher use evaluative conference | Student sets up and manages evaluation plan |

## SELF EVALUATION OF INDEPENDENT STUDY

1. How would you compare the work you did in your independent study program with the work done in other courses? (Consider the amount of time spent, the number of resources you used, and the effectiveness of your use of time.)

2. How valuable were your efforts to you? Comment on knowledge gained, new attitudes developed, and skills learned or improved.

3. How do you rate yourself on the major activities you completed?

4. State two or three viewpoints you now hold regarding yourself which are new or different from what you believed before starting your independent study.

5. Were you able to follow your original proposal?

   Did you do the activities as planned?
   Which activities were changed or omitted?
   What unplanned activities were added?

6. What kinds of evidence did you collect for evaluation, and how effective were they in measuring progress toward your objectives?

7. How does this independent study relate to your future?

INDEPENDENT STUDY GUIDELINES

GENERAL RULES

1. Independent Study students will be assigned for one full period each day in the Independent Study Teacher's classroom. (200 minutes per week for 1 credit, plus an equal amount of out-of-school work per week)

2. Independent Study students will abide by the same classroom rules as regular students. (Class attendance, notes, excused absences, etc.)

3. As Independent Study students complete the majority of their work without direct day-to-day instruction from their teacher, all work will be kept in a folder by the teacher and be available for evaluation at any time. At the end of the marking period all work completed will be evaluated by either the Independent Study Teacher, the Independent Study Coordinator, Independent Study Committee members, or all three. Grade will be determined by the quality and quantity of work in the student folder. Any disputed grade will be decided by the Independent Study Committee. The committee includes a Teacher, The Independent Study Coordinator and one Administrator.

4. Any Independent Study student that is out of the class area without written permission will be dropped from the Independent Study Program and assigned to study hall.

5. Independent Study students must take 4 full time courses before being approved to take Independent Study Courses.

6. Any teacher with more than 4 Independent Study students must get approval of the Independent Study Coordinator.

7. Independent Study Contracts must be complete and approved by the Independent Study Coordinator before student starts the course.

8. Course outlines must be submitted to the Independent Study Coordinator before the end of the 2 week drop/add period.

9. Independent Study Courses are subject to the same drop/add regulations as regular courses.

10. Any student who fails to fulfill the terms of the Independent Study Contract for 2 consecutive weeks at any time will be dropped from the course.

11. Any student that does not have sufficient work completed at the end of a marking period to receive a passing grade will be dropped from the Independent Study Course.

12. Independent Study courses must run for the full school year to get 1 credit.

BLUE MOUNTAIN UNION SCHOOL
Independent Study Contract

Name_____ Grade_____

Independent Study Teacher_____ Course Title_____

Date Starting_____ Date Completing_____ Amount of credit_____

Type of Independent Study Program: I _____ II _____ III _____ IV _____

This contract will be accompanied by:

I. Course description listing competencies
II. Course description listing competencies
III. Course description and objectives
IV. Learning Plan

What period each day will you be in your teacher's classroom?_____

What records will be kept?_____

Who will keep them?_____

Where will your folder of accumulated work be kept?_____

What products will result from this study? (Type and Length)_____

_____

_____

Who is responsible for evaluation of the product(s)?_____

_____

_____

What criteria will be used to evaluate progress/product(s)?_____

_____

_____

What type of grades will be given?_____

CONTRACT WILL BE TERMINATED AND STUDENT WILL BE ASSIGNED TO STUDY HALL FOR THE FOLLOWING:

1. If the student is out of classroom without written permission from the independent study teacher.
2. If student does not work on independent study course for two consecutive weeks.
3. If at the end of a marking period student does not have sufficient work in his folder to receive a passing grade for that marking period.

Teacher's Signature_____

Independent Study Coordinator Signature_____

Parent's Signature_____

Teacher Advisor's Signature_____

Student's Signature_____